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03 September 2003

GMB41888.E

Gambia: Situation of homosexuals (gays and lesbians) in Gambia, and treatment by government authorities and general public; whether homosexuality is illegal, and legal procedures and consequences for homosexuals
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

According to a Behind the Mask, "a website on gay and lesbian affairs in Africa," sex between men is hidden or secretive because Gambian society is hostile to men who engage in same-sex behaviour, stigmatizes homosexuality, treats it as sinful and criminalizes it (10 Dec. 2002). In March 2003, a religious leader argued that "a more realistic" approach to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) would be to engage in a "fight against adultery, homosexuality and lesbianism" (Behind the Mask 17 Mar. 2003).

In November 2002, *The Independent* reported that homosexuals, as well as prostitutes and illegal aliens, were facing a difficult time in Gambia because the Immigration Department had launched "consistent nationwide raids" against them, allegedly to crack down on "the swelling number of foreigners entering the country without proper documents" (25 Nov. 2002).

In late 1999, Behind the Mask also reported that President Yahyah Jammeh of Gambia had "join[ed] the league of African heads of states persistent on declaring homosexuals worse than animals" (Nov. 1999), when he stated in an interview with the BBC that "'I have seen that animals in general behave better than human beings [A]mong my animals [the president reportedly keeps a herd of disparate animals], there are no lesbians, no gays or whatever'" (*BBC Focus on Africa* Oct.- Nov. 1999, 45).

Reports on whether homosexuality is illegal, legal procedures and consequences for homosexuals in Gambia could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

BBC Focus on Africa [London]. October - December 1999. Vol. 10., No. 4. Veronique Edwards. "Jammeh Speaks."

Behind the Mask. 17 March 2003. Justice Darboe. "Gambia: Imam Calls for Fight Against Homosexuality."
<http://www.mask.org.za/SECTIONS/AfricaPerCountry/ABC/gambia/gambia_4.htm> [Accessed 28 Aug. 2002]

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<http://www.mask.org.za/SECTIONS/AfricaPerCountry/ABC/gambia/gambia_2.html> [Accessed 28 Aug. 2002]

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The Independent [Banjul]. Lamin Njie. "Immigration Intensify Raids."
<<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200211250713.html>> [Accessed 28 Aug. 2003]

Additional Sources Consulted

Africa Confidential

Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social and Cultural Series

Dialog

Resource Centre. Country File. Gambia

Internet sources, including:

Africa Online

AllAfrica.com

BBC Africa

Search engine

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